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SUBJECT: "DEFECTION" FROM ZCTU EFFECTED BY GREEN BOMBERS

1. Summary. The GOZ-sponsored press reported triumphantly that the Grain Marketing Board's (GMB's) workers have seceded from the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) to ally instead with the ZANU-PF organization, the Zimbabwe Federation of Trade Unions (ZFTU). However, the increasing number of National Youth Service graduates (colloquially known as "Green Bombers") within the GMB made such an eventual alliance a foregone conclusion. Rather than a victory for the ZFTU, this new alignment simply underscores the allegiance of the Green Bombers to the party line, regardless of the impact. End summary.

2. Press reports over the last year have claimed that increasing numbers of ZANU-PF youth militia have been absorbed into various GOZ, security force, and parastatal enterprises. One report indicated that up to 1,250 graduates of the National Youth Service were "hired" by the GMB -- some as unofficial "security" to maintain order in the growing queues for GOZ-distributed grain. As recruits of the GOZ who have been steeped in the party line and promised government-connected jobs, these graduates clearly understand that loyalty to the party is a condition of service. Labor contacts indicate that this contingent, rather than other GMB laborers, are behind the public defection of GMB workers from the ZCTU, which has often been reviled by the GOZ as a political rather than a labor organization.

3. Comment: Despite the claims of victory for the ZFTU, this realignment is merely a pro-forma statement of the youth militia's accord with ruling party ideology and submission to ruling party authority. Despite predatory attacks by the ZFTU on established unions, no other legitimate organizations have unilaterally changed alliances. Such reports underscore the GOZ-owned Herald newspaper's growing comfort -- in the absence of countervailing independent media sources -- with publishing whatever they please, regardless of the more subtle reality. End comment.

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